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Ministerial declaration

Promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work to eradicate poverty in the context of inclusive, sustainable and equitable economic growth at all levels for achieving the Millennium Development Goals

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations participating in the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2012 of the Economic and Social Council, held in New York from 2 to 10 July 2012,

Having considered the theme of the annual ministerial review of the high-level segment, "Promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work to eradicate poverty in the context of inclusive, sustainable and equitable economic growth at all levels for achieving the Millennium Development Goals",

Reaffirming the commitments made at the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, environmental, social and related fields to promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work,

Recalling the outcome of the thirteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, held in Doha from 21 to 26 April 2012,[1] and expressing our gratitude to the Government and people of Qatar for hosting the Conference,

Recalling also the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, entitled "The future we want",[2] and expressing our gratitude to the Government and people of Brazil for hosting the Conference,

Recalling further the holding by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization of the Third International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Shanghai, China, from 13 to 16 May 2012,

Looking forward to the International High-level Conference on Decent Work, to be held in Moscow on 11 and 12 December 2012,

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[1] See TD/500 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and 2.

[2] General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

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Reaffirming the resolve to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of our relevant national and international policies as well as our national development strategies, including poverty eradication strategies, as part of our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals,

Reaffirming also that the eradication of poverty is one of the greatest global challenges facing the world today, particularly in Africa and the least developed countries, and in some middle-income countries, and underlining the importance of accelerating sustainable, broad-based, inclusive economic growth, including full and productive employment generation and decent work,

Recalling article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[3] on the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment, and reaffirming the international commitments and obligations of States parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,[4] as well as the relevant internationally agreed labour standards of the International Labour Organization, and all human rights, including the right to development,

Reaffirming our commitment to achieving all of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, by, inter alia, promoting productive capacities, full and productive employment and decent work for all,

Recalling the International Labour Organization Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization[5] and the International Labour Organization Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up,

Reaffirming the leading role of the International Labour Organization in promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all,

Expressing deep concern about the continuing high levels of unemployment and underemployment, particularly among young people,

Recognizing the need to strengthen the productive capacity of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, including to address their infrastructure deficits,

Recognizing also the contribution of the Youth Forum, held by the Economic and Social Council in New York on 4 May 2012, to the deliberations of the Council on productive capacity, employment and decent work,

Recognizing further the contributions and recommendations of the regional preparatory meetings for the annual ministerial review of 2012,

Have adopted the following declaration:

1. We express deep concern about the ongoing adverse impacts, particularly on development, of the world financial and economic crisis, cognizant that the global economy is entering a challenging new phase with significant downside risks,

[3] General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

[4] See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

[5] A/63/538-E/2009/4, annex.

including the turbulence in global financial and commodity markets and widespread fiscal strains, which threaten the global economic recovery, and stress the need to continue to address systemic fragilities and imbalances and the need for continuing efforts to promote productive capacity, employment and decent work.

2. We recognize that the world faces serious social, environmental and economic challenges and that the achievement of sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development remains critical. We reaffirm the resolve to take concrete action to implement the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development[6] and to address the challenges of financing for development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity in support of the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

3. We recognize that people are at the centre of sustainable development and, in this regard, we strive for a world that is just, equitable and inclusive, and we commit to work together to promote sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development and environmental protection and thereby to benefit all.

4. We acknowledge the need to further mainstream sustainable development at all levels, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects and recognizing their interlinkages, so as to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions.

5. We recall the resolve to take urgent action to achieve sustainable development. We therefore reaffirm our commitment to sustainable development, assessing the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and addressing new and emerging challenges. We reiterate our determination to address the themes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, namely, a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development.

6. We stress that the promotion of sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth is necessary for accelerating progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, as well as for promoting sustainable development, but that it is not sufficient, and that growth should enable everyone, in particular the poor, to participate in and benefit from economic opportunities and should lead to job creation and income opportunities and be complemented by effective social policies.

7. We call for increased efforts to enhance coordination at all levels, with a view to strengthening national development strategies, stimulating investment in productive capacities, helping to start and grow businesses and promoting opportunities for full and productive employment and decent work for all.

8. We support continued efforts to put productive employment at the heart of actions to restore growth and promote a job-rich recovery at the national, regional and global levels, including through sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, by reinforcing cooperation and coherence in this area within the United Nations system and together with the international financial institutions.

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[6] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18–22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

9. We commit to embracing the policy approaches contained in the International Labour Organization Global Jobs Pact, as appropriate, and to introducing measures tailored to the circumstances and priorities of each country.

10. We stress the need to provide social protection to all members of society, fostering growth, resilience, social justice and cohesion, including those who are not employed in the formal economy. In this regard, we strongly encourage national and local initiatives aimed at providing social protection floors for all citizens. We support global dialogue on best practices for social protection programmes that takes into account the three dimensions of sustainable development and, in this regard, we note International Labour Organization Recommendation No. 202 concerning national floors of social protection.

11. We reiterate the need to adopt forward-looking policies, including macroeconomic policies, that are aimed at sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, poverty eradication and low and stable inflation and that seek to minimize internal and external imbalances to ensure that the benefits of growth reach all people, especially the poor, and the need to integrate those policies, in a coherent manner, with social and employment objectives, with a focus on mutually supportive strategies that lead to the rapid expansion of productive employment at adequate levels of remuneration.

12. We emphasize the need for more effective government involvement so as to ensure appropriate regulation of the market, which promotes productive capacity, full employment and decent work.

13. We recognize that a dynamic, inclusive, well-functioning and socially responsible private sector is a valuable instrument for generating economic growth and reducing poverty, emphasize the need to pursue, at the national level and in a manner consistent with national laws, appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks through which to encourage public and private initiatives, including at the local level, and to foster a dynamic and well-functioning business sector, while improving income growth and distribution, raising productivity, empowering women and protecting labour rights and the environment, and reiterate the importance of ensuring that the benefits of growth reach all people by empowering individuals and communities.

14. We recognize that, in order to achieve equitable development and foster a vibrant economy, it is vital to have a financial infrastructure that provides access to a variety of sustainable products and services for micro-, small and medium-sized businesses, with particular emphasis on women, rural populations and the poor. We will make sure that the benefits of growth reach all people by empowering individuals and communities and by improving access to services in the fields of finance and credit. We recognize that microfinance, including microcredit, has proven to be effective in generating productive self-employment, which can contribute to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

15. We reaffirm the need to develop and promote active labour market policies, including for the full participation of women and men in both rural and urban areas, to alleviate unemployment and underemployment.

16. We recognize the need to design education and training programmes that improve employability and individual capacities through skills development.

17. We urge States and, as appropriate, the relevant entities of the United Nations system and international and regional organizations, within their respective mandates, as well as civil society, the private sector, employer organizations, trade unions, the media and other relevant actors to continue to develop and strengthen policies, strategies and programmes to enhance the employability of women and youth and to ensure their access to full and productive employment and decent work, including by improving access to formal and non-formal education, skills development and vocational training, lifelong learning and retraining, and long-distance education, inter alia, in information and communications technology and entrepreneurial skills, particularly in developing countries, including with a view to supporting the economic empowerment of women in the different stages of their lives.

18. We encourage Member States to adopt and implement human resources development strategies premised on national development objectives that ensure a strong link between education, health, training and employment, help to maintain a productive and competitive workforce and are responsive to the needs of the economy.

19. We recognize the importance of developing policies, including effective labour market policies and legislation, as appropriate, that support statutory or negotiated minimum wage systems, acceptable conditions of work, strengthened labour standards, where necessary, and institutions of collective bargaining and labour administration, in order to, inter alia, avoid deflationary wage spirals, increase demand, promote economic stability, reduce poverty and inequality and achieve social justice.

20. We stress the need to build a critical mass of viable and competitive productive capacity in agriculture, manufacturing and services in the least developed countries, which is essential if they are to benefit from greater integration into the global economy, increase resilience to shocks and sustain inclusive and equitable growth, as well as eradicate poverty, achieve structural transformation and generate full and productive employment and decent work for all.

21. We encourage improvements in agricultural productivity to improve food security, access to goods and services and the development of employment along the agricultural value chain, as well as trade capacity-building in the agricultural sector, so as to raise incomes in both the farm and non-farm sectors in rural areas and to help poor households to cope with higher food prices, and reiterate the importance of empowering rural women as critical agents for enhancing agricultural and rural development and food security and nutrition.

22. We reaffirm the important work and inclusive nature of the Committee on World Food Security, including its role in facilitating country-initiated assessments on sustainable food production and food security, and encourage countries to give due consideration to implementing its Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security.

23. We support the promotion of innovative approaches in the design and implementation of employment policies and programmes for all, including the long-term unemployed.

24. We recognize the importance of providing social protection schemes for the formal and informal economy as instruments to achieve equity, inclusion and the stability and cohesion of societies, and emphasize the importance of supporting national efforts aimed at bringing informal workers into the formal economy. We urge Governments, with the cooperation of relevant entities, to develop systems of social protection and to extend or broaden, as appropriate, their effectiveness and coverage, including for workers in the informal economy, recognizing the need for social protection systems to provide social security and support labour market participation, and also urge Governments, while taking into account national circumstances, to focus on the needs of those living in or vulnerable to poverty and to give particular consideration to universal access to basic social security systems, recognizing that social protection floors can provide a systemic base from which to address poverty and vulnerability.

25. We emphasize the need for improved regulatory environments and policy initiatives that promote entrepreneurship, stressing the positive role that entrepreneurship plays in driving job creation.

26. We support national regulatory and policy frameworks that enable business and industry to advance sustainable development initiatives, taking into account the importance of corporate social responsibility. We call upon the private sector to engage in responsible business practices, such as those promoted by the United Nations Global Compact.

27. We stress the importance of promoting universal access to social protection systems, including by establishing and maintaining, as applicable, nationally determined social protection floors as a fundamental element of national social security systems, in line with International Labour Organization Recommendation No. 202 concerning national floors of social protection and bearing in mind the International Labour Organization Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102),[7] as an important means of assisting those living in or vulnerable to poverty while also helping to stabilize the economy, maintaining and promoting employability and protecting and further consolidating gains towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

28. We reaffirm the importance of promoting and attaining the goals of universal and equitable access to quality education, the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health and the access of all to primary health care as part of the effort to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration. We recognize the continued need to address the impact of non-communicable diseases, HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other major infectious diseases on social and economic development.

[7] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 210, No. 2838.

29. We also reaffirm the importance of the Dakar Framework for Action,[8] reaffirm the commitments to, by 2015, ensure complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality and access to such education and to achieve gender equality in education, and resolve to strengthen policies aimed at ensuring full and equal access to education at all levels through lifelong learning, including adult and long-distance education and training, and at adopting, promoting and attaining the goals of universal and equitable access to quality education, in particular for women and girls.

30. We recognize that it is necessary to increase vigilance and to achieve respect for international labour standards, and reaffirm our commitment to promote opportunities for full, freely chosen and productive employment as well as decent work for all, with full respect for fundamental principles and rights at work under conditions of non-discrimination, equity, equality, security and dignity.

31. We recognize the need to universally respect, promote and realize fundamental principles and rights at work, in accordance with the International Labour Organization Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

32. We stress the need to remove the obstacles to the full realization of the right of self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation, which adversely affect their economic and social development, including their exclusion from labour markets, and to promote their productive capacity, employment and decent work.

33. We stress the importance of removing obstacles to the social and economic development of people living in areas affected by complex humanitarian emergencies and terrorism and promoting their productive capacity, employment and decent work.

34. We also stress the importance of promoting and protecting the rights of women workers, of taking action to remove structural and legal barriers to, as well as eliminating stereotypical attitudes towards, gender equality at work, and of initiating positive steps towards the promotion of equal pay for equal work or for work of equal value.

35. We encourage Member States to undertake gender analyses of national labour laws and standards and to establish gender-sensitive policies and guidelines for employment practices, building on multilateral instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,[9] and relevant conventions of the International Labour Organization.

36. We recognize the need to improve opportunities for young people to gain access to productive employment and decent work through increased investment in youth employment, active labour market support and public-private partnerships, as well as through the creation of enabling environments to facilitate the participation of young people in labour markets, in accordance with international rules and commitments.

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[8] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Final Report of the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26–28 April 2000* (Paris, 2000).

[9] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

37. We stress the need to address the special challenges of youth employment in countries affected by conflict. In this respect, we urge strong collaboration among all relevant actors to promote and scale up best practices.

38. We further encourage efforts by the international community to promote balanced, coherent and comprehensive approaches to international migration and development, and recognize the important contribution of migrant workers for both countries of origin and countries of destination. We should resist unfair and discriminatory treatment of migrant workers and the imposition of unreasonable restrictions on labour migration in order to maximize the benefits of international migration, while complying with the relevant national legislation and applicable international obligations. We also recognize the need for Member States to continue considering the multidimensional aspects of international migration and development in order to identify appropriate ways and means of maximizing the development benefits and minimizing the negative impacts, including by exploring ways to lower the costs of transferring remittances, garnering the active engagement of expatriates and fostering their involvement in promoting investment in countries of origin and entrepreneurship among non-migrants.

39. We stress the importance of public-private partnerships in a wide range of areas, with the aim of eradicating poverty and promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all and social integration, as appropriate.

40. We emphasize that effective policies should be formulated and implemented through inclusive processes, in particular broad-based social dialogue with worker and employer representatives, and attention to the quality of governance and public services.

41. We recognize the need for the significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources and the effective use of financing in order to promote full and productive employment and decent work for all, and in this regard:

(*a*) We recall the resolve of Member States to enhance and strengthen national resource mobilization and fiscal space, including, where appropriate, through modernized tax systems, more efficient tax collection, the broadening of the tax base and the effective combating of tax evasion and capital flight;

(*b*) We recall that the ongoing fight against corruption at all levels is a priority, and reaffirm the need to take urgent and decisive steps to continue to combat corruption in all its manifestations in order to reduce obstacles to effective resource mobilization and allocation and to prevent the diversion of resources away from activities that are vital for development;

(*c*) We recognize that it is important to enhance the development impact of direct investment, including foreign direct investment, inter alia, by strengthening the productive sector and contributing to job creation. In order to contribute to development, all stakeholders should make efforts to promote foreign direct investment in such a way as to complement the development priorities of host countries. Foreign direct investment requires a stable, predictable and enabling investment climate. National capacities of developing countries should be strengthened in this regard. Investment policies should have a strong focus on sustainable development and inclusive growth;

(*d*) We reaffirm that international trade is an engine for development and sustained economic growth, and also reaffirm the critical role that a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system, as well as meaningful trade liberalization, can play in stimulating economic growth and development worldwide, thereby benefiting all countries at all stages of development as they advance towards sustainable development;

(*e*) We urge the members of the World Trade Organization to redouble their efforts to achieve an ambitious, balanced and development-oriented conclusion to the Doha Development Agenda,[10] while respecting the principles of transparency, inclusiveness and consensual decision-making, with a view to strengthening the multilateral trading system. In order to effectively participate in the work programme of the World Trade Organization and to fully realize trade opportunities, developing countries need the assistance and enhanced cooperation of all relevant stakeholders;

(*f*) We underline the fact that the fulfilment of all official development assistance commitments is crucial, including the commitments by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance to developing countries by 2015, as well as the target of 0.15 per cent to 0.20 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance to the least developed countries, and urge developed countries that have not yet done so to fulfil their commitments for official development assistance to developing countries;

(*g*) We stress the essential role that official development assistance plays in complementing, leveraging and sustaining financing for development in developing countries and in facilitating the achievement of development objectives, including the internationally agreed development goals, in particular the Millennium Development Goals, and welcome steps to improve the effectiveness and quality of aid based on the fundamental principles of national ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability;

(*h*) We note that the aid architecture has changed significantly in the current decade. New aid providers and novel partnership approaches, which utilize new modalities of cooperation, have contributed to increasing the flow of resources. Furthermore, the interplay of development assistance with private investment, trade and new development actors provides new opportunities for aid to leverage private resource flows;

(*i*) We consider that innovative mechanisms of financing can make a positive contribution towards assisting developing countries in mobilizing additional resources for financing for development on a voluntary basis and that such financing should supplement and not be a substitute for traditional sources of financing.

42. We encourage the sharing of experiences and best practices on ways to address the high levels of unemployment and underemployment, in particular among young people.

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[10] See A/C.2/56/7, annex.

43. We call for strengthened policy coherence and partnerships across the United Nations system, including the international financial institutions, as appropriate, while recognizing the respective mandates and governance structures of the constituent parts of the system, with a view to promoting the creation of decent work through enhanced policy dialogue, research and analysis, the collection of data, including data disaggregated by sex, age and disability, and the provision of technical assistance, and in this regard we recognize the role of the Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

44. We are concerned about labour market conditions and widespread deficits of available decent work opportunities, especially for young women and men. We urge all Governments to address the global challenge of youth employment by developing and implementing strategies and policies that provide young people everywhere with access to decent and productive work, as over the coming decades, decent jobs will need to be created so as to ensure sustainable and inclusive development and to reduce poverty.

45. We invite and encourage donors and international organizations, including the United Nations system, as well as the international financial institutions, the regional development banks, major groups and the private sector, to support the implementation of global strategies on employment.

46. We call upon the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to continue to coordinate their activities in a coherent manner in order to support national Governments, upon their request, to develop and expand social protection floors, in line with International Labour Organization Recommendation No. 202, including through the facilitation and promotion of South-South cooperation.

47. We call upon the United Nations agencies and programmes to enhance their efforts to help countries to develop coherent policies, including macroeconomic policies, that are employment- and entrepreneurship-friendly, and to highlight the role of the Economic and Social Council in providing a global forum for the discussion of those issues.

48. We encourage all stakeholders to consider collaborating with the United Nations system to create a youth volunteer programme under the umbrella of the United Nations Volunteers, and support the call by the Secretary-General for stronger partnerships with and for youth, by, inter alia, strengthening the youth focus of programmes on employment.

49. We stress the importance of keeping full and productive employment and decent work for all as a key cross-cutting theme on the agenda of the United Nations.

50. We call upon Member States to consider productive capacity, employment and decent work in the discussions of the post-2015 development agenda.

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